"Introduction: Territoriality of the vote. A framework of analysis"

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Introduction: Territoriality of the Vote: A Framework for Analysis

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1.1. Introduction

Over the last 40 years the institutional landscape in Western Europe has changed considerably. One of the most notable transformations of the state concerns processes of decentralization, federalization and regionalization. This development is well documented by the regional authority index (RAI) developed by Hooghe, Marks and Schakel (2010). For the 13 Western European countries which are the subject of research in this book, they observe that each of them underwent regional reform except for the Swiss *cantons* and the Faroe Islands. Not only has the authority exercised by regional governments increased but the biggest driver of this growth of regional authority has been the proliferation of elected institutions at the regional level (Marks et al., 2010).

Indeed, regional elections have been introduced in various countries at various times in Western Europe. Following the Second World War, regional elections have been held since 1945 for Austrian and German *Länder*, the Faroe Islands in Denmark, *regioni a statuto speciale* in Italy, Dutch *provincies*, Swedish *län*, Swiss *cantons* and Northern Ireland in the UK. Direct elections were introduced in the 1970s in the *Deutsche Gemeinschaft* in Belgium, Danish *amter* and Greenland, *regioni a statuto ordinario* in Italy and Norwegian *fylker*. During the 1980s, French *régions* and Spanish *comunidades autónomas* followed, and in the 1990s, elections were introduced for *gemeenschappen* and *gewesten* in Belgium, Greek *nomoi*, and London, Scotland and Wales in the UK. Clearly, regional elections are on the rise. We now have more regional elections in Western Europe than ever before and their importance has increased significantly as well.

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The decentralization processes and introduction of regional elections has not gone unnoticed by political scientists. Most scholars analyzing regional voting behavior are interested in the difference between the national and the regional vote. The starting point of these studies is often the same – namely, the second-order election model (Henderson and McEwen, 2010; Jeffery and Hough, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2009; Tronconi and Roux, 2009). The basic tenet of the second-order election model is that regional elections are subordinate to first-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). As a result, fewer voters tend to turn out, and those voters who bother to cast a vote have a tendency to support opposition, small or new parties to the detriment of those parties in national government.

The rank order of elections has recently been contested by quantitative, aggregate studies. Henderson and McEwen (2010) and Schakel and Dandoy (2014) find that the regional turnout is just a bit less than the turnout for national elections for many regions, and in some regions, such as some of the Swiss *cantons* and small (islands) regions, such as Åland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Valle d'Aosta, the regional turnout surpasses the turnout for national elections. In addition, a study of more than 2900 regional elections (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013) shows that the extent to which government parties lose vote share in regional elections varies hugely across regions, and it depends on the amount of authority exercised by the regional government and the extent to which non-statewide parties (NSWPs) participate.

This volume aims to study regional elections whilst avoiding what has been termed by Jeffery and Wincott (2010) 'methodological nationalism' – that is, the tendency of political scientists to take the national level as the unit of analysis. This tendency to choose the nation-state as a unit of analysis has been widespread across election research, and has often been an unreflected and uncritical, or 'naturalized', choice. As a result, most research on elections and election surveys concerns 'national' elections and more, in particular, lower chamber and presidential elections. A consequence of methodological nationalism is that phenomena not manifest or significant at the regional scale of analysis remain 'hidden from view' or, as Michael Keating puts it more directly (1998, p.ix), 'territorial effects have been a constant presence in European politics, but … too often social scientists have simply not looked for them, or defined them out of existence where they conflicted with successive modernization paradigms'. This is not to say that the nation-state is becoming redundant or rendered insignificant as regional-scale politics becomes more important. The national scale

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remains the primary focus of most citizens, political parties and interest groups in most areas of political contestation in most advanced democracies. What this collection of country studies aims to achieve is to examine regional elections 'on their own terms' instead of taking the 'prism' of national-level politics as the natural starting point (Jeffery and Schakel, 2013).

This book presents 13 country studies which analyze regional election results in depth. The countries are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.[1] These are all long-standing democracies with a history of more than five decades of holding free and fair national elections (except for Spain). The selection is worth studying because the countries vary considerably in their experience with regional elections: some have held regional elections for more than 50 years (Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland) while others introduced elections in the 1970s (Denmark and Norway), 1980s (France and Spain) and 1990s (Belgium, Greece and the UK). In addition, some countries introduced regional elections at various times for different territories: Belgium introduced them for the *Deutsche Gemeinschaft* in 1974, for the *Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest* in 1989, and for the *Vlaamse Gemeenschap* and the *Région Wallonne* in 1995; in Germany, elections for the East German *Länder* were reinstated in 1990; and in Italy and Spain, elections for *regioni a statuto ordinario*, respectively, non-historic *comunidades autónomas*, were introduced at later dates than for *regioni a statuto speciale* and the historic *comunidades autónomas*.

Regional elections are held to elect representatives for the regional government and therefore we need to define regional government. It is the government of a coherent territorial entity situated between the local and national levels with a capacity of authoritative decision-making (Hooghe et al., 2010). In more practical terms, Hooghe et al. (2010) include levels of government with an average population greater than 150,000. For the purpose of this volume, we include regional governments which hold direct elections and exclude those with indirect elections or which do not hold them. This decision leaves the vexed issue of multiple regional tiers which hold direct elections in a country. We have decided to focus on the highest regional tier, which in all cases is also the most authoritative regional government. The following subnational elections are excluded: provincial elections in Belgium, Italy and Spain; departmental (*canton*) elections in France; *Kreise* elections in Germany; and county elections in the UK. A list of the regional elections analyzed in this book is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Countries, regions and regional elections covered

Country	Region	N	Elections		N	RAI	
			First	Last		Min	Max
Austria	*Länder*	9	1945	2010	131	17.0	18.0
Belgium	Deutsche Gemeinschaft	1	1974	2009	10	5.0	16.0
	Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	1	1989	2009	5	18.0	18.0
	Vlaamse Gemeenschap	1	1995	2009	4	20.0	20.0
	Région Wallonne	1	1995	2009	4	20.0	20.0
Denmark	*Amter*	15	1974	2001	120	10.0	10.0
	Region	5	2005	2009	10	9.0	9.0
	Faroe Islands	1	1945	2008	19	20.0	20.0
	Greenland	1	1979	2009	10	10.0	20.0
France	*Régions*	21	1986	2010	84	8.0	8.0
	Corsica	5	1986	2010	3	8.0	8.5
Germany	*Länder* (west)	10	1949	2011	147	20.0	21.0
	Länder (east)	6	1990	2009	25	21.0	21.0
Greece	*Nomoi*	50	1994	2006	200	8.0	8.0
	Periphereis	10	2010	2010	10	8.0	8.0
Italy	*Regioni a statuto speciale*	5	1947	2009	66	9.0	18.0
	Regioni a statuto ordinario	15	1970	2010	120	7.0	14.0
The Netherlands	*Provincies*	12	1946	2011	194	13.5	14.5
Norway	*Fylker*	19	1975	2011	171	10.0	10.0
Spain	*Comunidades autónomas* (historic)	3	1980	2011	26	13.5	15.5
	Comunidades autónomas (non-historic)	16	1983	2011	107	12.5	15.0
Sweden	*Län*	21	1946	2011	445	10.0	10.0
Switzerland	*Cantons*	26	1945	2009	376	19.5	19.5
UK	Greater London Authority	1	2000	2008	3	9.0	9.0
	Northern Ireland	1	1945	2007	13	1.0	9.5
	Scotland	1	1999	2007	3	16.5	16.5
	Wales	1	1999	2007	3	11.5	11.5
Total		254			2311		

Notes: RAI = regional authority index score (Hooghe et al., 2010).

We apply a common framework which distinguishes between five dependent variables. Each country chapter will discuss congruence between the regional and national vote, turnout, change in vote shares between regional and national elections, government congruence, and electoral strength for NSWPs. These dependent variables are selected because they are thought to reflect the most important elements

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of regional voting behavior (see p.18–24). In addition, each of the contributions will discuss a common set of hypotheses in order to be able to derive the most important factors which lead to divergent regional election results.

In addition to a deductive part, the country chapters will employ an inductive research strategy. The contributors of the country studies were asked to assess how far they could identify factors which may impact on regional voting behavior in addition to the set of variables identified in the common framework. In other words, a 'top-down' approach is combined with a 'bottom-up' line of research. In the Conclusion (Chapter 15) we will make an overall assessment of the various proposed independent variables. We hope that the combination of deductive and inductive elements in the research framework does justice to the appeal of methodological nationalism for studying regional elections on their own terms and, at the same time, acknowledges the valuable work done by scholars who incorporated 'nationalist' assumptions in their work.

In the remainder of this Introduction, we proceed in two steps. First, we confront the use of the second-order election model as the dominant framework in regional election research by pointing out conceptual and empirical challenges. Next, we present the analytical framework of this volume, which consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the factors that may impact on regional election behavior and identifies regional institutions and territorial cleavages as two broad categories of independent variables. The second part concentrates on the dependent variable side and introduces congruence of the vote as the main aspect of regional electoral behavior. In order to gain an insight into the causes of dissimilarity in the vote, this framework also includes turnout, vote share changes, government congruence and vote shares for NSWPs as secondary dependent variables. We end by briefly introducing the country studies, and we save the summary and implications of the country chapter findings for the Conclusion.

1.2. Conceptual and empirical challenges for the second-order election model

Perhaps the most often used framework to study regional elections is the second-order election model. The core claim of the second-order election model is that there is a hierarchy in perceived importance of different types of election. National elections are of a first-order nature and all other elections, such as European, subnational, second chamber

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and by-elections, are subordinate to first-order elections. Because there is 'less at stake' in second-order elections, voters are prompted to use their vote to vent their spleen about national-level politics (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). The second-order model echoes earlier work on US Congressional mid-term elections (Miller and Mackie, 1973; Tufte, 1975), and US scholars have labeled these elections 'barometer' elections (Anderson and Ward, 1996) or mid-term 'referendums' (Simon et al., 1991; Simon, 1989; Carsey and Wright, 1998).

The core assumption underlying the second-order election model is that there is 'less at stake' in regional elections, and this leads to three predictions with regard to regional election results:

1. Turnout in regional elections is lower than for national elections.
2. Government parties lose votes.
3. Small, new and opposition parties gain votes.

Because there is generally less at stake in regional than in national elections, voters are inclined not to cast a vote in the former. Voters who do turn out use regional elections to send a signal to the party in statewide office by voting for the party in opposition or voting for new and/or small parties. We argue that the second-order election model may be challenged on a conceptual as well as empirical basis.

If one traces the intellectual roots of the second-order election model, one will stumble upon a developed US scholarship on mid-term Congressional elections (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013). The term 'second-order election' was introduced by Reif and Schmitt (1980) to explain patterns observed in the first European Parliament (EP) election. They were inspired by the work of Dinkel (1977) on German *Länder* elections, who was in turn influenced by the US literature on mid-term elections (Reif, 1997). Elections for the US Congress are held every second year and they coincide with the US presidential elections once every four years. Hence, a mid-term election occurs when an election for Congress is held at mid-term between two presidential elections. The idea is that every election (i.e. including state and local elections) is subordinate to the first-order, presidential election and is used by voters to send a signal to the presidential party. It appears that mid-term Congressional elections produce a systematic loss for the party of the president and only 2 out of a total of 28 mid-term elections between 1900 and 1980 did not produce a loss (Niemi and Fett, 1986). The US literature takes the mid-term loss as a given and tries to explain the magnitude of this loss (e.g. Erikson, 1988; Soberg Shugart, 1995).

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Mid-term elections have produced a large scholarship, but, unfortunately, this literature is not very useful for analyzing regional elections in Europe due to US 'exceptionalism' with regard to its electoral institutions. Mid-term elections are particularly rare for regional elections in European countries. National and regional elections often have independent electoral cycles, and regional elections can be placed anywhere in the national electoral cycle. In the US, horizontal and vertical simultaneity is widespread – that is, several subnational and national elections are held on the same date whereas the picture is far more varied and complex in Europe. In addition, the terms for office in the US are fixed whereas early (or late) elections are common in Europe. Finally, the US has a clear two-party structure with regular government alternation, which enables voters to use state and mid-term elections to send a signal to the president in office by voting for the opposition party. In Europe, multiparty coalitions are the norm and government alternation is not regular for all parties. In addition, there is a relatively high turnover of parties in the party systems of many European countries compared with the US party system. Together, these factors hamper a voter's ability to use their regional vote to send a signal to the national electoral arena.

Second-order election scholars adhere to the same assumption as those scholars across the ocean, assuming that electoral behavior in second-order elections is shaped by political factors in the first-order arena and that voters use second-order elections to express satisfaction or disappointment toward national politics. In other words, regional election results can be largely explained by observing which parties are in government or in opposition at the statewide level. Reif and Schmitt (1980, p.8) stated that second-order elections may be found beyond the remit of EP elections and that local, second chamber, by-elections and regional elections may be second-order as well. This has led several authors to apply second-order election model to regional elections (Pallares and Keating, 2003; Dupoirier, 2004; Floridia, 2010). In particular, Jeffery and Hough have advanced the study on regional elections. They started with German *Land* elections (2001, 2003) and included in two subsequent studies Austria, Belgium and Italy (2006) and Canada, Spain and the UK (2009). As soon as they went beyond the German case, Jeffery and Hough recognized that the 'analytical lens for exploring regional elections, that of "second-orderness" is found wanting' (2003, p.211). This led them to analyze regional power and depth of territorial cleavages next to the placement of the regional election in the national election cycle as variables to explain government party losses. Nevertheless, they remained 'captured' within the second-order election

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framework by hypothesizing that 'the more significant decision-making powers there are at stake in sub-state elections, the less second-order voting behavior will be', and that 'if sub-state elections are held in areas with distinctive territorial identities, voters are more likely to disconnect themselves from the first-order, statewide arena' (Jeffery and Hough, 2009, p.224).

More recently, Charlie Jeffery realized that we need to go 'beyond the nation-state' (Jeffery, 2011, p.137) to understand political processes at the regional level. He posits that regional election research, including his own work, has been subject to 'methodological nationalism' – that is, 'a set of assumptions that establish the nation-state as a natural unit of analysis' (Jeffery, 2011, p.137). Reporting on contributions to an edited collection on regional elections in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, Jeffery and Hough (2006, p.252) conclude: 'The general finding, then, is that most sub-state elections do indeed appear to be second-order, subordinate to voters' considerations of state-level politics.' However, in later work Jeffery acknowledged that

> there may be a sense of self-fulfilling prophesy at play here. Research findings may be path-dependent on research questions. If other starting points are taken which treat regional elections on their own terms, rather than as functions of national elections, a different or at least more nuanced picture might emerge.
>
> (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013, p.4)

The second-order election model can be empirically challenged as well. Regional election studies confirmed several predictions of the second-order election model. Regional turnout is lower than for national elections (Pallares and Keating, 2003; Schakel and Dandoy, 2014); government parties tend to lose vote share whereas opposition, new and small parties gain in regional elections (Jeffery and Hough, 2003; Pallares and Keating, 2003); and the extent to which government parties lose and opposition parties win vote share varies according to the placement of the regional election in the national electoral calendar (Jeffery and Hough, 2003). However, the same set of studies also concludes that the degree to which regional elections may be considered second-order varies substantively. Even if regional elections are frequently second-order, it is not in a uniform way across countries. Canadian elections are considered to be clearly non-second order (Jeffery and Hough, 2009, p.231), and France displays a larger incongruence between national and regional elections than Austria or Germany (Dupoirier, 2004, p.585). Jeffery and Hough (2003) find only partial confirmation that regional

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elections are second-order in the case of Germany and Spain. In addition, they observe a reduced tendency to follow the national electoral cycle and a growing dissimilarity between regional and national election results. Similarly, Tronconi and Roux (2009) conclude in the case of the Italian regions that the degree to which regional elections may be considered to be second-order depends on the decade of observation. In addition, Pallares and Keating (2003) observe that Spanish governing parties generally lose regional elections, but national opposition parties do not consistently win. For French regions, Dupoirier (2004, p.590) concludes that only some of the regions can be considered clearly second order or nationalized. Finally, in our own comparative work we conclude that the second-order election predictions are not born out for the majority of regions. Turnout in the regions of Switzerland, Denmark (the Faroe Islands and Greenland) and Italy (special statute regions) is greater for regional than for national elections, and those regions which hold elections at their date of choosing report higher turnout rates than those which hold their elections on the same date (Schakel and Dandoy, 2014). With respect to government party losses, Schakel and Jeffery (2013) conclude that only 18 per cent out of a total of 2933 regional elections clearly follow second-order model predictions.

In conclusion, the second-order election model has limited explanatory power with regard to regional election results and the model can be questioned on a conceptual level as well. Our aim in this book is to adopt a framework of analysis which allows one to study regional elections 'on their own terms' and which, at the same time, also acknowledges that the second-order election model might have some merit.

Regional election research shows that the 'stakes-based' assumption in the second-order election model provides an important element in the explanation of regional election results. Regional-scale factors and processes will play a larger role when the regional electoral arena becomes more relevant. Following Jeffery and Hough (2009), we may expect that institutional factors, most importantly regional authority, and territorial cleavages will increase the stakes of a regional election. Each set of factors is discussed below.

1.3. What is at stake: Institutions

The authority exercised by regional government is often considered to be a key institutional variable capable of influencing regional electorates and regional party strategies (Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Pallarés and Keating, 2003; Swenden, 2006). Thorlakson (2007) argues that

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decentralization gives both parties and voters the incentive and opportunity to mobilize and respond to locally defined issues which may lead to the development of 'unique' party systems at the regional level. With decentralization, the regional level becomes more relevant to the voter. Voters may understand that the regional level has independent policy-making capacity and may vote according to their evaluation of the performance of regional government. This creates in turn an incentive for parties in the regional arena to deviate their policies from the statewide party when adhering to these statewide party policies involves electoral risks in the regional arena (Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Maddens and Libbrecht, 2009). Decentralization also creates multiple regional arenas of competition, which leads to the potential for issues to be mobilized differently across the regions, resulting in variation in dimensions of conflict and variation in voter and party alignments (Thorlakson, 2009). A shift of authority in fiscal matters and policy-making from the national to the regional level intensifies these processes.

The relevance of the regional political arena for regional electorates and regional parties can be assessed according to various indicators. Most importantly we analyze the effects of decentralization of government authority but we also identify several characteristics of regional election systems which may impact on the regional vote. These are the timing of regional elections (simultaneity of elections), electoral rules (proportional versus majoritarian systems) and electoral thresholds.

Decentralization of government authority

The most detailed political decentralization measurement is the regional authority index (RAI) developed by Hooghe, Marks and Schakel (2010). This measurement distinguishes between self-rule (authority exercised by a regional government over those who live in the region) and shared rule (authority exercised by a regional government or its representatives in the country as a whole). Self-rule and shared rule are operationalized according to the following eight dimensions.

Self-rule is the sum of the following four dimensions:

- *Institutional depth*: the extent to which a regional government is autonomous rather than deconcentrated (0–3);
- *Policy scope*: the range of policies for which a regional government is responsible (0–4);
- *Fiscal autonomy*: the extent to which a regional government can independently tax its population (0–4);

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- *Representation*: the extent to which a region is endowed with an independent legislature and executive (0–4).

Shared rule is the sum of the following four dimensions:

- *Law making*: the extent to which regional representatives co-determine national legislation (0–2);
- *Executive control*: the extent to which a regional government co-determines national policy in intergovernmental meetings (0–2);
- *Fiscal control*: the extent to which regional representatives co-determine the distribution of national tax revenues (0–2);
- *Constitutional reform*: the extent to which regional representatives co-determine constitutional change (0–3).

Regional authority varies across countries, within countries between regions, and over time, and the RAI captures this variety by providing scores per region on a yearly basis. Table 1.1 presents the countries, regional tiers, election period and RAI scores.

Regional authority varies to a great extent across territory and across time. The lowest RAI scores are to be found for Danish *Regions* (9.0), French *régions* (8.0) and Greek *nomoi* and *peripheries* (8.0). The most powerful regions can be found in the federal countries of Austria (18.0), Belgium (20.0), Germany (21.0) and Switzerland (19.5), and the special autonomous regions in Denmark (20.0) and Italy (18.0). In between these two groups, we may find the regional tiers in unitary decentralized countries of the Netherlands (*provincies*: 14.5), Norway (*fylker*: 10.0) and Sweden (*län*: 10.0) and the regionalized states of Italy (*regioni a statuto ordinario*: 14.0), Spain (*comunidades autónomas* about 15.0) and the UK (Wales: 11.5; Scotland: 16.5).

Regional authority varies not only across countries but also between regions within countries. The most notable examples are the different RAI scores between various regions in Belgium (16.0–20.0), between the *amter/region* (10.0/9.0) and the Faroe Islands (20.0) and Greenland (20.0) in Denmark, between Corsica (8.5) and *régions* (8.0) in France, between *regioni a statuto ordinario* (14.0) and *regioni a statuto speciale* (18.0) in Italy, between the historic (15.5) and non-historic (15.0) *comunidades autónomas* in Spain, and between the devolved institutions in the UK (9.0–16.5).

Finally, regional authority has also changed over time. It has increased for the regions in Austria, Belgium, Germany (western *Länder*), Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. RAI scores have remained stable for the

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Danish *amter/regions*, French *régions*, east German *Länder*, Greek *nomoi* and *peripheries*, Norwegian *fylker*, Swedish *län* and Swiss *cantons*. There are only two cases of centralization of authority, which happened for Corsica (–0.5) and Northern Ireland when home rule was replaced by deconcentrated government (a change from 9.5 to 1.0).

From this overview of the variation in and development of regional authority, it follows that the extent to which regional elections are subordinate to the national electoral arena may be expected to vary to a similar degree. The RAI measures formal institutional authority, and one could argue that it underestimates the role of regional tiers in the provision of policies which is better assessed with fiscal decentralization measures. Similarly, one could also argue that public perception on the importance of the regional tier is what matters rather than institutional or fiscal authority. Therefore we have asked the authors of the country chapters to consider fiscal decentralization and, when available, public opinion data alongside regional institutional authority.[2]

Regional election systems

Taking the second-order election model as a starting point has led regional election scholars to focus on the timing of the regional election in the national election cycle. When regional elections are held on the same date as national elections, regional election outcomes mirror those for national elections. However, as soon as the regional election decouples from the national election cycle, differences in vote share may appear. In their study of elections for the German *Länder*, Jeffery and Hough (2001, p.76) argue that support for the main political parties in regional elections follows a cyclical pattern. Governing parties enjoy an (often painfully short) honeymoon period shortly after their election victory with levels of support at times even rising higher than the share of vote won. The honeymoon is followed by an (often rapid) drop in support, which continues until roughly the middle of the legislative period, when it 'bottoms out'. At the same time, support for the main opposition party increases. Only in the period immediately before the next national election do the governing parties recover support (see also Jeffery and Hough, 2003).

Next to vertical simultaneity of elections, one may also assume that holding several (or all) regional elections simultaneously (i.e. horizontal simultaneity) amplifies their second-order qualities by giving them collective nationwide reach and resonance (Jeffery and Hough, 2006, p.249). Schakel and Dandoy (2014) examine the effect of vertical and horizontal simultaneity on turnout in regional elections in great detail.

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They identify six electoral cycle regimes according to whether regional elections are held simultaneously with national, local and other regional elections or follow their own independent election cycle. It appears that turnout increases significantly according to the extent to which elections are held concurrently.

Van der Eijk et al. (1996) argue that an increase in turnout for concurrent elections is a consequence of the heightened political atmosphere. Concurrent elections significantly increase turnout because the interest of these elections – in terms of issues, candidates, parties, media coverage and campaign spending – is multiplied (Matilla, 2003). When regional elections are held on the same date one may expect greater involvement of candidates, media and parties from the statewide electoral arena, thus creating an approximation of a first-order, national poll. Table 1.2 shows the extent to which regional elections are held simultaneously with national, local and other regional elections.

Regional elections are rarely held simultaneously with national elections except in Sweden, where all local, regional and national elections are held on the same date. However, Table 1.2 presents data for the 2000s, and regional elections have been held concurrently with national elections in Austria (1945–1949), Belgium (1995–1999) and France (1986), and incidentally with several elections in Andalusia and Austrian and German *Länder*. Apart from simultaneity with national elections we may differentiate between three electoral regimes:

1. All regional and local elections are held simultaneously. This is the case for Denmark (*amter/regions*), Greece, Italy (*regioni a statuto ordinario*), Norway, Spain (non-historic *comunidades autónomas*) and the UK (Scotland and Wales).
2. All regional elections are held concurrently but on a different date from that for local elections. This electoral cycle regime is present in Belgium, France and the Netherlands.
3. Regional elections may follow their own independent election cycle. This applies to Austrian and German *Länder*, the Faroe Islands and Greenland, *regioni a statuto speciale* in Italy, the historic *comunidades autónomas* in Spain, Swiss *cantons*, and the Greater London Authority and Northern Ireland.

Table 1.2 also reports on the electoral rules which translate votes into seats, the electoral thresholds and the number of rounds. Most regional elections consist of one round, and only France and Greece have two

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Table 1.2 Institutional characteristics of regional election cycles and regional election systems in the 2000s

Country	Regional tier	Vertical simultaneity		Horizontal simultaneity	Electoral system	Electoral threshold (%)	Number of rounds
		national	local				
Austria	*Länder*	no	no	no	PR	4–5	1
Belgium	*Gemeenschappen/Gewesten*	no	no	yes	PR	5	1
Denmark	*Amter/Region*	no	yes	yes	PR	0	1
	Faroe Islands/Greenland	no	no	no	PR	4	1
France	*Régions*	no	no	yes	mixed	0	2
Germany	*Länder*	no	no	no	mixed	5	1
Greece	*Nomoi/Peripheries*	no	yes	yes	PR	0	2
Italy	*Regioni a statuto speciale*	no	no	no	PR	0–5	1
	Regioni a statuto ordinario	no	yes	yes	PR	2–5	1
The Netherlands	*Provincies*	no	no	yes	PR	0	1
Norway	*Fylker*	no	yes	yes	PR	0	1
Spain	*Comunidades autónomas* (historic)	no	no	no	PR	3–5	1
	Comunidades autónomas (non-historic)	no	yes	yes	PR	3–5	1
Sweden	*Län*	yes	yes	yes	PR	3	1
Switzerland	*Cantons*	no	no	no	MAJ/PR	0–10	1
UK	Greater London Authority	no	no	no	mixed	5	1
	Northern Ireland	no	no	no	PR	0	1
	Scotland/Wales	no	yes	yes	mixed	0	1

Notes: PR = proportional representation; MAJ = majoritarian.
Source: The country chapters in this book.

rounds. The electoral threshold varies from 0 to 2 per cent and may go up to 10 per cent in the case of some Swiss *cantons*. Most regional election systems are proportional but mixed electoral systems apply to (some) regions in France, Germany and the UK. Interestingly, majoritarian or plurality electoral systems can only be found in some Swiss *cantons*.

The overview provided in Table 1.2 shows a huge variety in electoral systems across countries and regions, which should contribute to the heterogeneity of cross-regional voting behavior. Each chapter presents further details about regional institutions and reports on changes in the applied regional election systems (e.g. compulsory voting, regional assembly–regional executive relationship and country-specific provisions).

1.4. What is at stake: Territorial cleavages

A second important element which may increase the relevance of the regional electoral arena is the extent to which regional elections are used by voters to express preferences different from those expressed at national elections. The basis of territorial cleavage theory lies in sociological approaches which explain dissimilarity of party systems by the extent to which territorial cleavages are politicized (Lijphart, 1977; Livingston, 1956). Several scholars analyzing regional elections have observed that if substate elections are held in areas with distinctive territorial identities, voters are more likely to disconnect themselves from the first-order arena and make different vote choices in the substate context (Jeffery and Hough, 2009).

Increased dissimilarity between vote shares may be expected when sociological differences are politicized by regional actors. Newman (1996, p.7) ascribes the tendency for ethnic differences to be politicized to 'the rational desire [of social actors] to convert efficiently political resources into political power'. Political actors adapt their demands and presentation to the concerns and language of regionally differentiated groups so as to maximize their influence on state policies. In sum, a territorial cleavage approach predicts that the regional vote will be different from the national vote to the extent that regional voters have a distinctive socioeconomic identity and, more so, to the extent that this distinctive identity is mobilized by a regional party.

We differentiate between diversity with respect to language and history. Table 1.3 displays the regions which achieve positive scores on the regional language and the regional history index developed by Fitjar

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Table 1.3 Regional diversity with regard to language and history

Country	Regional language index	Regional history index
Austria	Burgenland (1), Carinthia (1)	
Belgium	Brussels (2), Flanders (2), Wallonia (2)	
Denmark	Faroe Islands (3); Greenland (3)	
France	Alsace (1); Aquitaine (2); Brittany (2); Languedoc-Rousillon (2); Lorraine (1); Nord-Pas de Calais (1)	Alsace (2); Lorraine (2); Franche-Comte (1); Languedoc-Rousillon (1); Nord-Pas de Calais (1); Rhone-Alpes (1); Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur (1)
Germany	Saxony (1); Schleswig-Holstein (1)	Baden-Wurttemberg (2); Bavaria (2); Brandeburg (1); Hesse (1); Mecklenburg Vorpommern (1); Nord Rhine-Westphalia (1); Saxony (1); Saxony-Anhalt (1); Schleswig-Holstein (1); Thuringia (1)
Greece	Central Macedonia (1); Thessaly (1)	Crete (3); Aegean Islands (2); Central Macedonia (2); East Macedonia (2); Thrace (2); Epirus (1); Thessaly (1)
Italy	Friuli-Venezia Giulia (3); Sardinia (3); Trentino Alto Adige (2); Aosta Valley (1); Piedmont (1); Sicily (1)	Friuli-Venezia Giulia (2); Trentino Alto Adige (2); Aosta Valley (1); Lombardy (1); Piedmont (1); Sardinia (1); Sicily (1); Tuscany (1); Veneto (1)
The Netherlands	Friesland (3)	
Norway	Finnmark (2)	
Spain	Balearic Islands (3); Catalonia (3); Galicia (3); Valencia (3); Basque Country (2); Navarre (1);	Basque Country (2); Catalonia (2); Andalusia (1); Navarre (1); Valencia (1)

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Sweden	Norbotten (2)	Halland (1); Jamtland (1); Skane (1); Vastra Gotaland (1)
Switzerland	German-/French-speaking *cantons* (2); Ticino (1)	
UK	Scotland (2); Wales (2)	Scotland (2)

Notes: *Regional language index*: This is made up of the following items, with one point awarded for each: (1) there is an indigenous regional language that is different from the dominant (plurality) language in the state; (2) the regional language is spoken by at least half of the region's population; (3) the language is not the dominant language of any state.

Regional history index: This is made up of the following three criteria, with one point awarded for each: (1) the region has not been part of the current state since its formation; (2) the region was not part of the current state for the entire twentieth century; (3) the region has been an independent state.

Sources: Fitjar (2009, 2010); scores for Denmark and Switzerland are added by the editors.

(2009, 2010). The regional language index captures the importance and indigenousness of regional languages in regions. The historical sovereignty index captures the extent to which the region itself or states other than the current sovereign have governed the territory.

A striking observation from Table 1.3 is that each country has one or more regions where a group of people speak a minority language. Most countries also have regions with a history of independence and most notably those countries for which state formation happened relatively late – that is, France, Greece, Germany and Italy. For Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and, to a lesser extent, France, Sweden and the UK, the territorial cleavages only affect a minority of regions and population. However, in Belgium, Italy, Spain and Switzerland, and to a lesser extent Germany and Greece, territorial cleavages between regions are omnipresent.

Territorial heterogeneity can be found with respect to an infinite number of dimensions, but most authors relate voting patterns to territorial cleavages with respect to ethnicity, language, religion, history or economy (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan and Urwin, 1983; Van Houten, 2007). The country chapters discuss territorial cleavages with regard to religion and economy (or any other dimension) when their authors think these cleavages impact on regional electoral outcomes.[3]

Given the huge diversity in decentralization, the various regional election systems and the huge diversity with respect to territorial cleavages across regions and across time, we can only assume that electoral

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behavior will vary to a similar extent. We would even argue that homogenization of electoral behavior is actually the least likely outcome one might expect. Yet Caramani (2004) observes a nationalization trend of electoral behavior in West European national elections – that is, voters increasingly vote more alike across the territory. Caramani (2004, p.291–292) offers an interesting hypothesis for the apparent paradox between regional diversity and nationalization of electoral behavior: 'federal structures reduce the expression of regional protest in the party system by opening up institutional channels of voice'. If this claim is true, then one expects the homogenization of electoral behavior in national elections but not for regional elections. In the next section we will describe the aspects according to which regional electoral behavior will be analyzed in the country chapters.

1.5. Aspects of regional election behavior

We have chosen to focus on five central aspects of electoral behavior in regional elections:

1. congruence of the vote between regional and national elections;
2. turnout in regional and national elections;
3. changes in vote shares between regional and national elections;
4. congruence between regional and national governments;
5. NSWP strength in regional and national elections.

Congruence of the vote describes the differences in vote share between regional and national elections. The aim of this book is to assess how far these differences in the vote are a reflection of the subordination of regional elections to the national electoral arena or whether the differences are an indication of regionalized voting behavior. 'Second-order effects' may be assessed by looking at turnout and changes in vote share for parties in statewide government and opposition. 'Regionalized election behavior' may be assessed by looking at government congruence and NSWP strength. In other words, the second and third variables reflect the 'top-down' line of research whereas the fourth and fifth variables allow us to develop a 'bottom-up' approach. Our strategy here is to fix the dependent variables across the country chapters and to let the country experts reflect upon the patterns they observe. In the remainder of this Introduction we will discuss the five dependent variables that structure the analyses presented in this book.

Congruence of the vote between regional and national elections

A comparison between regional and national election vote shares is widely used to assess regional distinctiveness (see e.g. Pallares and Keating, 2003; Jeffery and Hough, 2003, 2009; Skrinis and Teperoglou, 2008; Tronconi and Roux, 2009; Floridia, 2010). The objective of these analyses is to assess the degree to which electoral results in a specific region diverge from those in another region or from the national electoral arena. Most studies use a dissimilarity index to measure distinctiveness in the vote. This index, sometimes referred to as the Lee Index, is identical to the Pedersen Index of electoral volatility but, instead of comparing an election with another earlier election, a regional election is compared with a national election. The dissimilarity index is calculated by taking the sum of absolute differences between regional and national vote shares for each party and dividing the sum by 2 (to avoid double counting). The formula is

$$Dissimilarity = \frac{1}{2}\sum_{i=1}^{n} |X_{iN} - X_{iR}|$$

where X_{iN} is the percentage of the vote won by party i in a given national election, N, and X_{iR} is the percentage of the vote won by party i in the closest (in time) regional election, R, to the national election in question. Scores may vary from complete congruence/similarity (0 per cent) to complete incongruence/dissimilarity (100 per cent).

An interesting aspect of the dissimilarity index is that we may vary the comparison with respect to the type of election or vote share (i.e. national elections (*N*) or regional elections (*R*)) in conjunction with the territorial unit of analysis (i.e. national level (*N*) or regional level (*R*)) (Schakel, 2013). For instance, we may compare the national party system at the national level (*NN*) with the regional or national election result in a particular region (*NN* versus *RR*, or *NN* versus *NR*). We may also compare the national vote with the regional vote in the same region (*NR* versus *RR*). Finally, we may compare the regional election result aggregated at the national level with a particular regional result (*RN* versus *RR*).

The dissimilarity index is used by Hearl, Budge and Pearson (1996), who compare the regional vote in national elections (*NR*) with the aggregate national vote (*NN*). The dissimilarity index has also been used by Jeffery and Hough (2003), who compare national election results in a region with the results for regional elections in the same region (*NR* versus *RR*). Finally, Dupoirier (2004) uses the dissimilarity index in a third

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way, comparing the results of a party in one region with the results of the same party across all regions (*RN* versus *RR*).

The variety in dissimilarity indices does not contribute to our understanding of regional elections because findings and conclusions may be dependent on the measurement used. To prevent this from happening, here we follow the approach laid down by Schakel (2013), who conceptualizes and operationalizes dissimilarity or congruence of the vote in three ways. *NN – RR* evaluates the extent to which a particular regional party system is different from the national party system, which is the result of two sources of variation: the extent to which a regional electorate is different from the national electorate combined with the extent to which the regional electorate switch their vote between regional and national elections. The regional election is compared with the national election and, at the same time, the national electorate is compared with the regional electorate.

To tease out the two sources of variation in party-system congruence (*NN – RR*), one needs to consider electorate congruence (*NN – NR*) and election congruence (*NR – RR*). Electorate congruence (*NN – NR*) taps into the extent to which a particular regional electorate is different from the national electorate. The type of election is held constant and one compares national election results for the whole country with those for a particular region. The benefit of this conceptualization is that one does not have to consider second-order election effects because one uses first-order election results only. A possible drawback of this conceptualization is that it could lead to an underestimation of regional distinctiveness because it does not consider the effect of dual voting – that is, party systems may appear more congruent than they really are because statewide parties typically perform better in national than in regional elections. In contrast, election congruence (*NR – RR*) evaluates the extent to which a regional electorate votes differently in national and regional elections. This conceptualization keeps the regional electorate constant but varies the type of election. One benefit is that the effects of dual voting are incorporated, but one underestimates dissimilarity because regionally distinct electorates may express their distinctiveness in both regional and national elections with low dissimilarity scores as a result.

In this volume we explore the conditions under which the regional vote tends to differentiate from the national vote by reflecting upon the patterns in the three operationalizations of congruence of the vote. Dissimilarity is calculated for those parties which obtained at least 5 per cent of the regional vote in national elections (*NR*). The vote share obtained in national elections (i.e. *NN* or *NR*) is compared with the

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closest in time regional election vote share (*RR*). The data come from Schakel (2013) and are updated where relevant by the authors of the country chapters.

Turnout in regional and national elections

The aim of this volume is to assess how far congruence in the vote can be attributed to the subordinate status of regional elections to the national electoral arena. One of the clear predictions of the second-order election model is that turnout should be low or, at least, lower in the subordinate election than in the first-order election. The rationale is that there is 'less at stake' in the second-order arena and 'what is important is the political situation of the first-order arena at the moment when the second-order election is being held' (Reif, 1985, p.8). Consequently, voters are not bothered about turning out for regional elections. Many regional election scholars compare turnout between national and regional elections to evaluate second-order effects (Pallares and Keating, 2003; Jeffery and Hough, 2009; Floridia, 2010). Comparative studies of turnout in regional elections are rare (we found one: Henderson and McEwen, 2010), especially when compared with the number of studies devoted to national turnout (see the literature reviews by Geys, 2006; Blais, 2006; Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998). Here we analyze turnout, defined as the number of voters who cast a vote (voters) as a proportion of the total number of voters who are allowed to cast a vote (electorate), in regional and national elections. Turnout data come from Schakel and Dandoy (2014) and are updated where relevant by the authors of the country chapters.

Vote share changes between regional and national elections

Another prediction of the second-order election model is that parties in national government will lose votes whereas those in the opposition will gain votes in regional elections. Moreover, voters' propensity to behave in these ways follows a cyclical logic: they are most likely to do so at the midpoint between elections that produce national governments, and less likely to do so soon after, or in the run-up to, an election that produces a state-level government. Although this is one of the strongest predictions of the second-order election model, surprisingly it has had little systematic empirical testing in the case of regional elections. Notable exception is the work by Jeffery and Hough (2001, 2003, 2009) on electoral cycles and multilevel voting in Germany, Spain and the UK.

In this book, second-order election effects are explored by calculating changes in vote share for government and opposition parties. Vote share

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change is calculated by subtracting the vote share obtained in regional elections from that received in the previous national election. This operationalization implies that second-order election data are constructed for only those parties which compete in national and regional elections. Data on vote share change are obtained from Schakel and Jeffery (2013) and are updated where relevant by the authors of the country chapters.

Government congruence between regional and national electoral arenas

Government participation in a multilevel setting raises new questions for parties. For example, 'To step in government at only one level or to stay in opposition at both? To opt for a single consistent strategy or to try out various, but sometimes conflicting, coalition formulae? To replicate coalition agreements at the federal level or to adapt them to the regional context, even if this means departing from a coherent party line?' (Ştefuriuc, 2009a, p.2). Similar to parties, voters are also faced with new questions. They are confronted by the possibility of voting for the preferred party they wish to see in regional government or wanting to send a signal to the party in statewide government by voting for the party in opposition in the national parliament. The former represents regionalized voting behavior whereas the latter indicates the subordinate nature of the regional election to the national electoral arena.

The extent to which a regional voter will hold the national or regional government accountable depends on the structure of the party system. In two-party systems (e.g. Greece, Spain UK), voting for the opposition party in the national parliament sends a clear message to the party in national government. In contrast with two-party systems, voters in multiparty systems are often confronted by coalition governments at both the national and regional tiers, which blur government responsibility, especially when the members of the coalition are in part overlapping. As a result, two-party systems may be more conducive to second-order election effects than multilevel party systems.

The extent to which a regional voter is able to hold the national or regional government accountable also depends on the role that the region plays in national decision-making. For example, in Germany, *Land* governments directly elect their representatives in the *Bundesrat* (upper chamber), which has veto power over about 60 per cent of legislative acts. Government congruence therefore has a direct bearing on national politics, and the vote for the opposition party in national parliament may have huge consequences for federal policies. The German

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voter has a unique opportunity to balance the federal government party at both the national *and* the regional level by voting for the opposition in *Land* elections.

Looking at aggregate-level election results will not allow us to reveal the considerations that regional voters might take into account when they cast their vote. The authors will report on ticket-split voting when voter survey data are available but, unfortunately, regional election surveys are scarce. One way to explore the extent to which voters hold governments accountable is to look at government congruence. For example, in case of complete government *in*congruence (e.g. Labour in Wales and the Conservatives in Westminster), we are not able to assess whether a vote share gain for the party in regional government is a voter reward for the party in regional government or a punishment for the party in national government. However, in case of government congruence (e.g. Labour in Wales and Labour in Westminster), we are more confident that a vote share gain for the party in regional government is a reward given by the voters to regional performance because according to the second-order election model, Labour should have lost vote share. Hence the extent and frequency of government congruence may serve as an indirect measure of a regionalized behavior in regional elections, although this measurement needs to be interpreted with great care and with consideration for the party system structure and particular institutional settings.

In analogy to congruence of the vote, government congruence may be conceptualized as the extent to which regional and national governments are similar (Däubler and Debus, 2009; Deschouwer, 2009a; Ştefuriuc, 2009b; Swenden, 2002; Wilson, 2009). Government congruence is indicated by a dissimilarity index but, in contrast with congruence in the vote, there is only one operationalization – namely, the national government (*NN*) is compared with the regional government (*RR*). Another difference is that seat shares instead of vote shares for the governing parties are taken. The government congruence data are compiled by the authors of country chapters.

Non-statewide party strength in regional and national elections

An important cause of diverging regional and national party systems is the presence of what has been labeled nationalist, regional, regionalist or NSWPs. We prefer to adopt the term 'NSWP' for two reasons. First, the NSWP is defined as a party which participates in elections in only part of the country in contrast to statewide parties which participate in all elections across the statewide territory. Often, a regional party is defined

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as receiving its vote share in one region only (Brancati, 2008). However, this operationalization would exclude parties such as the Lega Nord in Italy and the PDS in Germany, which participate in elections in more than one but not all regions. The Lega Nord participates in elections in the northern part of Italy and the PDS was mainly present in the East German *Länder*. These contribute clearly to the territorial heterogeneity of the vote and would not be on our 'radar' when we apply a very strict definition.

A second advantage of using the concept of NSWP is that it is neutral with regard to the ideology of the party. This allows the authors of the country chapters to discuss the ideology of the NSWPs that they find in their country. Dandoy (2010) identifies protectionist, decentralist and secessionist parties. Protectionist parties seek to defend the interests of a culturally and linguistically defined minority. Decentralist parties challenge the division of power between the central state and the region. Finally, secessionist parties seek to detach the region from its host state in order to establish an independent state. To this classification we may add those non-statewide parties which 'defend' or 'represent' the region on some kind of ideological basis. For example, an NSWP may make a claim for more state subsidies for a relatively poor region or for less fiscal equalization between regions to the benefit of an affluent region.

One should be careful in taking the presence of NSWPs as direct evidence of regionalized election behavior. One of the predictions of the second-order election model is that small parties should gain vote share in regional elections. Most NSWPs are small parties, particularly in a national context. One way to avoid the pitfall of wrongly interpreting NSWP strength as regionalized election behavior is to take a closer look at the ideology of these parties. Therefore, the authors will discuss the issues that these parties emphasize to attract the regional voter.

We present vote share data for NSWPs obtained in regional and national elections. Data on NSWPs come from Massetti and Schakel (2013) and are updated and amended where relevant by the authors of the country chapters.

1.6. This book

This book analyzes regional elections for 13 countries in Western Europe (see Table 1.1). In total we analyze 2309 elections held in 254 regions in 13 countries between 1945 and 2011. The 13 country chapters appear in alphabetical order and each author explores the explanatory power

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of regional institutions and territorial cleavages (top-down or deductive approach) with respect to regional electoral behavior, but they also propose additional causes for diverging regional party systems when they think that these factors should be considered as well (bottom-up or inductive approach).

To enhance comparison we have adopted a common framework for the chapters. Each begins with an introduction, which is followed by a section on 'Regional government and regional elections'. The analysis of election data starts with an examination of 'Congruence of the vote'. The fourth section looks at 'Second-order election effects', and the authors analyze turnout and vote share changes between the regional and the previous national election. The next section looks specifically for evidence of 'Regionalization of the vote' with the help of government congruence and the presence and strength of NSWPs. In the conclusion to each chapter, the authors address the question of how far regional elections in their country are nationalized or regionalized. To further enhance comparison across the chapters we have standardized measurements, figures and tables.

We have assembled data on the five aspects of regional election behavior, and the full variation across regions and parties, and over time, are provided in country Excel files, which include 5 figures and 17 tables. The Excel files and the codebook are published on a webpage to accompany this book on the website (www.arjanschakel.nl) of one of the editors (A.S.). The authors of the country chapters reflect upon the most interesting figures and tables, which means that not all figures and tables are discussed. Readers who would like access to the data or would like more detail are advised to download the country Excel files.

In the Conclusion (Chapter 15) we draw comparisons between the country chapters and discuss the proposed independent variables and their effects on regional voting patterns. There we consider what we have learned from the in-depth country studies and point out implications for the study on regional elections.

Notes

1. Regional elections also occur in Finland (Åland) and in Portugal (Açores and Madeira) but since these insular regions only represent a small portion of the national territory and population, they are not included in this book.
2. In an appendix to the book which is published online (www.arjanschakel.nl), we discuss regional government according to fiscal decentralization data published by Eurostat (2012), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation

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and Development (1997) and Stegarescu (2005), and according public to perceptions by drawing on the Special Eurobarometer 307 commissioned by the European Commission (2009).

3. In the appendix to the book (see www.arjanschakel.nl) we provide a discussion about regional diversity with regard to economic affluence by drawing on Eurostat (2012) data on regional gross domestic product per capita.

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